

“The Greater Healing”

St. Mark’s Gospel is the shortest of the four Gospels – and it’s been said that he doesn’t waste ink. He gets right to the point – “immediately” – “pay attention.” Jesus has just healed the man with the unclean spirit – left the synagogue and entered Simon and Andrew’s house – only to run into more problems.

“Immediately” they tell Jesus that Simon’s mother-in-law has a fever – after all, Jesus is for her, for this purpose He has come – to heal. He takes her by the hand and resurrects her.

The Season of Epiphany is full of Jesus’ miracles, His healings – which reveal who Jesus is (the Son of God), and why He has come (to heal). “Pay attention” – don’t miss the point – as Jesus heals the man with the unclean spirit – as He heals this mother – and all the others who are bound by sickness, unclean spirits, evil – bound by SIN.

A common word used for “forgiveness” in the Bible literally means “to loose” – to set free, unbind. As when Jesus says to His disciples – “whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Sin binds! All illnesses, corruption, destruction, decay, chaos, burdens – all have their source, not in God, but in man’s sin. It may be the result of a specific sin that I have committed that binds me – or the result of sin in general – man’s sin that has thrown God’s “good” creation into chaos. Regardless, sin binds.

And that is why the Son of God has come in the flesh. Jesus comes to heal – to loose from sin by taking our sin, and all sin, as His own – to redeem all sin by His bloody sacrifice on the cross.

After sundown, when the Sabbath had ended, the “whole city” is brought to the door of the house – and “He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons.” Try to imagine what that must have been like.

People being carried on mats, or hobbling on their own. People lying all over the place, moaning in pain. Demonized people spitting and cursing and foaming at the mouth. People with horrible, disfiguring, contagious diseases. It looked like a trauma center --- it looked like hell.

And there is the Good Physician Jesus, making His rounds – laying on His hands – healing broken bones and leprosy – silencing the demons and casting them out. Heal one – and they all will come. There is no end to the diseased and demonized.

Now, try to imagine Jesus showing up here at Immanuel and He begins to heal the sick. Imagine the people that would be brought to our doors. For starters, those listed in the Prayer of the Church, and many more – those with cancer, heart disease, seizures, diabetes, paralysis, broken bones – those recovering from surgery – those on hospice – people with fevers, colds, arthritis, the flu.

St. Mark tells us that in the darkness of the early morning Jesus leaves the house and goes to a desolate place to pray. But before long, here comes Simon and the others, saying – “Everyone is looking for you.”

Have you noticed the language St. Mark has been using? ALL the sick ... the WHOLE city ... EVERYONE is looking for you. The whole world, everyone – needs the healing that Jesus has come to bring.

Jesus, it's time to get back to work His disciples suggest. But Jesus' response is peculiar – “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for THAT is why I came out.” He doesn't head back to Simon's house – He doesn't set up shop in Capernaum – He leaves and goes on to other towns – and many who are sick and oppressed by demons are left behind.

You no doubt have prayed to the Lord for healing, for yourself, or someone else – and there was no healing. You are tempted to believe that God doesn't care about you or your loves ones – that He has abandoned you (left you to attend to others). That is why these words of our Lord are an EPIPHANY for you today – revealing what the Lord is up to.

Did you notice that He didn't say – "lets go elsewhere that I might HEAL others, for that is why I came out"? What He does say is that He came to PREACH. The Son of God has taken on human flesh in order to preach to you – to preach the Gospel. And what is that Gospel? That He has come to take your sin into His own flesh – to suffer and die for your sin – and to release you from the bondage of sin and the death that it brings.

Yes, I know that you want Him to heal you physically – but there is a greater healing. Being a Christian means living by faith – trusting the Lord and His will for your life – trusting His timing, His promises. That's why He preaches to you – so that you may live by faith – so that you may know He loves you, He is with you, and He has come to give you the greater healing ... the eternal healing.

Into this house Jesus has come and He forgives you all your sin. He "looses" you, sets you free, to live by faith. He may, or may not heal your diseases – or calm your earthly turmoil. But where Jesus forgives sins, He gives life and salvation.

Simon's mother-in-law was set free from her fever – but she would eventually die. All those brought to the door of the house and were healed by Jesus, would also die. The miracles which Jesus performed were not the end – they were epiphanies – manifestations of what happens when one is no longer bound by sin. And, they are a preview of that which is to come – the manifestation of the greater healing.

It is that greater healing that Jesus gives you this day in His preaching of the Gospel – with His Body and His Blood. Forgiveness, life and salvation for all who believe. That is why He comes to you today – so that He may give you His eternal healing.

And like He did with Simon's mother-in-law, in His time, on the Last Day – He will take you by the hand and resurrect you to everlasting life. A life free from sin and the bondage it brings – a life without sickness, chaos, or any burden. A life with Him in His glory – a life without end. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.